



Finance Committee

February 22, 2021

United States Senate

Dear Chairman Wyden, Ranking Member Crapo, and Members of the Committee:

We are pleased to support the nomination of Xavier Becerra as Secretary of Health and Human Services.

Mental Health America is the nation's leading community-based nonprofit dedicated to addressing the needs of those living with mental illness and promoting the overall mental health of all. We advocate for the inclusion of mental health as a part of overall health. Our mission is driven by a focus on prevention for all, early identification and intervention for those at risk, and integrated services for those who need them, with recovery as the goal. We have argued that mental health conditions are the only chronic conditions that, as a matter of public policy, we have waited until stage four – the crisis stage – to treat, and that as we do with every other condition, we must act before Stage 4 to advance mental health and recovery.

We support Attorney General Becerra's nomination because we believe that he had demonstrated a decades-long commitment as a public official to promoting the health and well-being of the population. As a member of Congress, he sponsored and supported legislation that has proven essential on the journey to health equity for all our people, including those affected by mental illnesses. As the Attorney General of California, his efforts in support of enforcing mental health parity, for example, are well-known and critically important. So, too, were his efforts throughout his career to build an Affordable Care Act that did not leave essential benefits for people with mental health conditions behind. His efforts to promote community health centers has also led to increased access to mental healthcare through integrated health and behavioral health services as part of their comprehensive primary care mandate.

Attorney General Becerra's background in lawmaking, enforcement, and government make him an outstanding choice to lead the Department of Health and Human Services. In his past work, he has demonstrated the skills of focusing on the most critical problems and learning from all stakeholders. These are the critical skills and talents needed to lead a large, complex, governmental agency and direct its energies to serving all those in need. We strongly support his nomination and urge you to quickly confirm him as HHS Secretary given the unprecedented health, including mental health, needs of the country at this time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul Gionfriddo".

Paul Gionfriddo (*he/him/his*)

President and CEO

Mental Health America

